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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON IRAQ

Summary

-- The lead story in all papers today, July 21, highlights King Abdullah's instruction to the current Prime Minister to dissolve and reform a cabinet to coincide with the formation of the newly-elected Jordanian parliament. The new government is expected to be announced today. Other lead stories highlight "continued military and political deterioration" in Iraq, with the killing of more U.S. soldiers. Front-page reports emphasized a "lack of movement" in the recent meetings between Israeli PM Sharon and Palestinian PM Abbas, particularly on the issue of the release of Palestinian prisoners.

Editorial Commentary

-- "America's Political Parties in Iraq are Becoming Isolated"

Chief Editor Taher Udwan writes on the back page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (07/20): "Once again, we feel optimistic, not just because of the escalating resistance against the occupation, but also because of the return to life of Iraqi society, even though this is being done through sectarianism never known in Iraq before. It does not matter as long as this sectarianism is increasingly supporting anti-occupation slogans and is in defense of the freedom and independence of Iraq. The demonstrations that took place in Baghdad, Koufa, Basra and other Iraqi cities stressed that 'America's parties' that have arrived aboard American tanks are now besieged and isolated, as the Iraqi people prove, day in and day out, that they will not be an American 'colony'."

-- "Why the resistance?"

Daily columnist Fahd Fanek writes on the back page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (07/21): "Every action has an equal reaction that is reversed in direction, and the reaction to a foreign occupation is national resistance. This is a sacred law of nature, which cannot be weakened by some of those who are cooperating with the occupiers on the pretext that the occupation is a reality and must thus be acknowledged and cooperated with. What applies to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza applies to the American occupation of Iraq. Resistance is not only the right of the people who reside under the occupation, but is their duty.. We will likely soon see, under the impact of the resistance, an attempt to internationalize or Arabize the occupation by brining in mercenary armies that would implement the will and desire of the occupation and save the blood of the American soldiers."

-- "The scapegoat"

Daily columnist Bater Wardam writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (07/21): "Whether it was an assassination or a suicide, the death of David Kelly, the British WMD expert, is the beginning for exposing the biggest lie in the history of international politics. The cost of this lie must be paid by those who perpetrated it by completely ending their political lives, and here we are referring to Tony Blair and George Bush. The leaders of the two biggest democratic countries in the world have been lying to their people, to the world and to the media throughout the months that preceded the war on Iraq. We in the Arab world have always known it was a lie.. This political scandal must be paid for by George Bush and Tony Blair alone. David Kelly and George Tenet must not become the scapegoats for the biggest political lie in the history of the United States and Britain. Most importantly, the

American and British people must never believe any similar lies that would be told against Iran or Syria."
-- "With the Iraqi people's choice"

Daily columnist Musa Hawamdeh writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (07/21): "I have been surprised that some people continue to refer to an article I wrote after the fall of Baghdad in which I criticized the former Iraqi regime, although I did not overlook the American and Zionist motives in Iraq, and expressed my categorical rejection of the war. Some people misinterpreted my criticism as welcoming the Americans and the British to occupy Iraq. This is utterly false.. Some people want to prevent us from expressing our opinion freely and honestly, as if our criticism of the Iraqi President's policy justifies or supports the occupation. I do not know who would promote the current thinking that you are either with Saddam, a victim or a victimizer, or with the Americans, as if you cannot reject the American occupation and reject the policy of the former regime together.. I still believe that the Saddam Hussein regime committed major and fatal errors. True, his only good-doing is marked by his stand against the United States and Israel after 1991, his call for liberating Palestine from the sea to the river, although he did go into Kuwait in 1990 and into Iran in 1980 instead of Palestine, and the fact that he has an Arab nationalistic thinking. However, that does not prevent seeing the negative aspects and the disastrous policies of this regime, its contempt for freedom of expression, and its use of the security and intelligence apparatus to crack down against intellectuals and journalists. All these errors, however, do not give America the right to occupy Iraq, change its regime, cancel its army and its party, and form the sectarian governing council. We support the Iraqi resistance whatever its direction is, and if Saddam has something to do with it, we still support the resistance. We believe that Saddam will not return as a president for Iraq and the Iraqis, and that they alone are the masters of their political future. We, however, support the expulsion of the Americans and the British from Iraq by all means possible and we believe no cooperation, whether on the Iraqi or Arab level, should take place with this unjust occupation."

-- "Who killed David Kelly?"

Columnist Usama Sharif writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (07/21): "Clearly, the Iraqi issue, in both its military and political aspects, is going to upset the leaders of the Anglo-American coalition for a long time, and may even threaten the hopes of the two leaders of remaining in power. While resistance actions against the occupation are escalating and more and more American soldiers are falling in the streets of Iraqi cities and villages, the threads of the political scandal are unraveling and public opinion increasingly believes that its government meant to mislead it to impose the option of going to war. The question that follows Kelly's death is why did Blair and Bush resort to these tricks to launch the war and what is the real reason for occupying Iraq? More importantly, will this scandal oust the two most powerful leaders in the world?"

HALE